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ROBERT
BROWNING



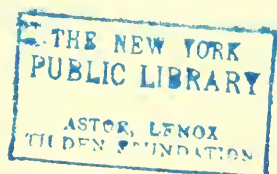
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AN

(Youngman, C.)

Hubbard





Robert Browning
From Photograph taken from life, in 1870
by Ernest Edwards.

SDW
LITTLE
JOURNEYS

to the Homes of
ENGLISH
AUTHORS

Robert Browning

Written by **ELBERT**
HUBBARD and done
into a Printed Book by
the **ROYCROFTERS** at
their Shop, which is in
EAST AURORA, Erie
Co., New York, U. S. A.

A. D. 1901

P.C.




Copyright, 1901, by Elbert Hubbard.

So, take and use Thy work,
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim !
My times be in Thy hand !
Perfect the cup as planned !
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same.

—Rabbi Ben Ezra.

ROBERT BROWNING



IF there ever lived a poet to whom the best minds pour out libations, it is Robert Browning. We think of him as dwelling on high Olympus; we read his lines by the light of dim candles; we quote him in sonorous monotone at twilight when soft-sounding organ  chants come to us mellow and sweet. Browning's poems form a lover's litany to that elect few who hold that the true mating of a man and woman is the marriage of the mind. And thrice blest was Browning, in that fate allowed him to live his philosophy—to work his poetry up into life, and then again to transmute life and love into art. Fate was kind: success came his way so slowly that he was never subjected to the fierce, dazzling searchlight of publicity: his recognition in youth was limited to a few obscure friends and neighbors. And when distance divided him from these, they forgot him; so there seems a hiatus in his history, when for a score of years literary England dimly remembered some one by the name of Browning, but could not just place him.

About the year 1868 the author of "Sor-

ROBERT
BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING dello" was induced to appear at an evening of "Uncut Leaves" at the house of a nobleman at the West-End, London. James Russell Lowell was present and was congratulated by a lady, sitting next to him, on the fact that Browning was an American.

✿ "But only by adoption!" answered the gracious Lowell.

"Yes," said the lady, "I believe his father was an Englishman, so you Americans cannot have all the credit; but surely he shows the Negro or Indian blood of his mother. Very clever, is n't he?—so very clever!"

Browning's swarthy complexion, and the fine poise of the man—the entire absence of "nerves," as often shown in the savage—seemed to carry out the idea that his was a peculiar pedigree. In his youth, when his hair was as black as the raven's wing and coarse as a horse-tail, and his complexion mahogany, the report that he was a Creole found ready credence. And so did this gossip of mixed parentage follow him that Mrs. Sutherland Orr, in her biography, takes an entire chapter to prove that in Robert Browning's veins there flowed neither Indian nor Negro blood.


Dr. Furnivall, however, explains that Browning's grandmother on his father's side came from the West Indies, that nothing is known of her family history, and that she was a Creole.


And beyond this, the fact is stated that Robert Browning was quite pleased when he used to be taken for a


Jew,—a conclusion made plausible by his complexion, hair and features.

ROBERT
BROWNING

✿ In its dead-serious, hero-worshipping attitude, the life of Robert Browning by Mrs. Orr deserves to rank with Weems' "Life of Washington." It is the brief of an attorney for the defence. Little Willie anecdotes appear on every page.

And thus do we behold the tendency to make Browning something more than a man—and, therefore, something less 

Possibly women are given to this sort of thing more than men—I am not sure. But this I know, every young woman regards her lover as a distinct and peculiar personage, different from all others—as if this were a virtue—the only one of his kind. Later, if fate is kind, she learns that her own experience is not unique. We all easily fit into a type and each is but a representative of his class 

Robert Browning sprang from a line of clerks & small merchants; but as indemnity for the lack of a family 'scutcheon, we are told that his uncle, Reuben Browning, was a sure enough poet. For once in an idle hour he threw off a little thing for an inscription to be placed on a presentation ink bottle, and Disraeli seeing it, declared "Nothing like this has ever before been written!" 

Beyond doubt, Disraeli made the statement—it bears his ear-mark. It will be remembered that the Earl of Beaconsfield had a stock form for acknowledging receipt of the many books sent to him by aspiring

ROBERT BROWNING authors. It ran something like this: "The Earl of Beaconsfield begs to thank the gifted author of —— for a copy of his book, and gives the hearty assurance that he will waste no time in reading the volume."

And further, the fact is set forth with unction that Robert Browning was entrusted with a latch-key early in life, and that he always gave his mother a good-night kiss. He gave her the good-night kiss willy-nilly. If she had retired when he came home, he used the trusty latch-key and went to her room to imprint on her lips the good-night kiss. He did this, the biographer would have us believe, to convince the good mother that his breath was what it should be; and he awakened her so she would know the hour was seasonable.

In many manufactories there is an electric apparatus wherewith every employee registers when he arrives, by turning a key or pushing a button. Robert Browning always fearlessly registered as soon as he got home—this according to Mrs. Orr.

Unfortunately, or otherwise, there is a little scattered information which makes us believe that Robert Browning's mother was not so fearful of her son's conduct, nor suspicious as to his breath, as to lie awake nights and keep tab on his hours. The world has never denied that Robert Browning was entrusted with a latch-key, and it cares little if occasionally, early in life, he fumbled for the key-hole. And my conception of his character is that when in the few instances Aurora, rosy goddess of the morn, marked his home-

coming with chrome-red in the eastern sky, he did not search the sleeping rooms for his mother to apprise her of the hour. **ROBERT BROWNING**

In one place Mrs. Orr avers, in a voice hushed with emotion, that Browning carefully read all of Johnson's Dictionary "as a fit preparation for a literary career."

✿ Without any attempt to deny that the perusal of a dictionary is "fit preparation for a literary career," I yet fear me that the learned biographer, in a warm anxiety to prove the man exceeding studious and very virtuous, has tipped a bit to t' other side.

She has apotheosized her subject—and in an attempt to portray him as a peculiar person, set apart, has well nigh given us a being without hands, feet, eyes, ears, organs, dimensions, passions.

But after a careful study of the data, various visits to the places where he lived in England, trips to Casa Guidi, views from Casa Guidi windows, a journey to

Palazzo Rezzonico at Venice where he died, and

many a pious pilgrimage to Poets' Corner, in

Westminster Abbey, where he sleeps, I

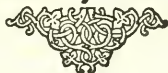
am constrained to believe that Robert

Browning was made from the same

kind of clay as the rest of us.

He was human—he was

splendidly human.



ROBERT
BROWNING



BROWNING'S father was a bank clerk; and Robert Browning, 3rd, author of "Paracelsus," could have secured his father's place in the Bank of England, if he had had ambitions. And the fact that he had not was a source of silent sorrow to the father, even to the day of his death in 1866.

Robert Browning, the grandfather, entered the Bank as an errand boy, and rose by slow stages to Principal of the Stock Room. He served the Bank full half a century, & saved from his salary a goodly competence. This money, tightly and rightly invested, passed to his son. The son never secured the complete favor of his employers that the father had known, but he added to his weekly stipend by what a writer terms, "legitimate perquisites." This, being literally interpreted, means that he purchased paper, pens and sealing wax for the use of the Bank, and charged the goods in at his own price, doubtless with the consent of his superior, with whom he divided profits. He could have parodied the remark of Fletcher of Saltoun and said, "Let me supply the perquisite-requisites and I care not who makes the laws." So he grew rich—moderately rich—and lived simply and comfortably up at Camberwell, with only one besetting dissipation: he was a book-collector and had learned more Greek than Robert 3rd was to acquire. He searched book-stalls on the way to the

City in the morning, and lay in wait for First Editions on the way home at night. When he had a holiday, he went in search of a book. He sneaked books into the house, and declared to his admonishing wife the next week that he had always owned 'em, or that they were presented to him. The funds his father had left him, his salary and "the perquisites," made a goodly income, but he always complained of poverty. He was secretly hoarding sums so as to secure certain books.

✱ The shelves grew until they reached the ceiling, and then book-cases invaded the dining room. The collector did n't trust his wife with the household purchasing; no bank clerk ever does—and all the pennies were needed for books. The good wife, having nothing else to do, grew anæmic, had neuralgia and lapsed into a Shut-In, wearing a pale-blue wrapper and reclining on a couch, around which were piled—mountain high—books 🍁

The pale invalid used to imagine that the great cases were swaying and dancing a minuet, and she fully expected the tomes would all come a-toppling down & smother her—and she did n't care much if they would; but they never did. She was the mother of two children—the boy Robert, born the year after her marriage; and in a little over another year a daughter came, and this closed the family record.

The invalid mother was a woman of fine feeling and much poetic insight. She did n't talk as much about books as her husband did, but I think she knew the

ROBERT good ones better. The mother & son moused in books
BROWNING together, and Mrs. Orr is surely right in her suggestion that this love of mother and son took upon itself the nature of a passion.

The love of Robert Browning for Elizabeth Barrett was a revival and a renewal, in many ways, of the condition of tenderness and sympathy that existed between Browning and his mother. There certainly was a strange and marked resemblance in the characters of Elizabeth Barrett and the mother of Robert Browning; and to many this fully accounts for the instant affection that Browning felt toward the occupant of the "darkened room," when first they met. The book-collector took much pride in his boy, and used to take him on book-hunting excursions, and sometimes to the Bank, on which occasions he would tell the Beef-Eaters how this was Robert Browning, 3rd, and that all three of the R. B.'s were loyal servants of the Bank. And the Beef-Eaters would rest their staves on the stone floor, and smile Fifteenth Century grimaces at the boy from under their cocked hats. Robert, 3rd, was a healthy, rollicking lad, with power plus, and a deal of destructiveness in his nature. But destructiveness in a youngster is only energy not yet properly directed, just as dirt is useful matter in the wrong place.

To keep the boy out of mischief, he was sent to a sort of kindergarten, kept by a spinster around the corner. The spinster devoted rather more attention to the

Browning boy than to her other pupils—she had to, **ROBERT**
to keep him out of mischief—and soon the boy was **BROWNING**
quite the head scholar.

✿ And they tell us that he was so much more clever than any of the other scholars that to appease the rising jealousy of the parents of the other pupils, the diplomatic spinster requested that the boy be removed from her school—all this according to the earnest biographer. The facts are that the boy had so much energy & restless ambition; was so full of brimming curiosity, mischief and imagination—introducing turtles, bats and mice on various occasions—that he led the whole school a merry chase and wore the nerves of the ancient maiden to a frazzle.

He had to go.

✿ After this he studied at home with his mother. His father laid out a schedule, and it was lived up to, for about a week.

Then a private tutor was tried, but soon this plan was abandoned, and a system of reading, best described as “natural selection,” was followed.

The boy was fourteen, & his sister was twelve, past. These are the ages when children often experience a change of heart, as all “revivalists” know. Robert Browning was swinging off toward atheism. He grew melancholy, irritable and wrote stanzas of sentimental verse. He showed this verse, high-sounding, stilted, bold and bilious, to his mother and then to his father, and finally to Lizzie Flower.

ROBERT BROWNING A word about Lizzie Flower : She was nine years older than Robert Browning; and she had a mind that was gracious and full of high aspiration. She loved books, art, music, and all harmony made its appeal to her; & not in vain. She wrote verses and, very sensibly, kept them locked in her work-box; and then she painted in water colors & worked in worsted. A thoroughly good woman, she was far above the average in character, with a half minor key in her voice and a tinge of the heart-broken in her composition, caused no one just knew how. Probably a certain young curate at St. Margaret's could have thrown light on this point; but he married, took on a double chin, moved away to a fat living and never told.

No woman is ever wise or good until destiny has subdued her by grinding her fondest hopes into the dust.

✿ Lizzie Flower was wise and good.

She gave singing lessons to the Browning children. She taught Master Robert Browning to draw.

She read to him some of her verses that were in the sewing table drawer. And her sister, Sarah Flower, two years older, afterwards Sarah Flower Adams, read aloud to them a hymn she had just written, called "Nearer My God to Thee."

Then soon Master Robert showed the Flower girls some of the verses he had written.

Robert liked Lizzie Flower first-rate, & told his mother so ✿ A young woman never cares anything for an unlicked cub, nine years younger than herself, unless

fate has played pitch and toss with her heart's true love. And then, the tendrils of the affections being ruthlessly lacerated and uprooted, they cling to the first object that presents itself.

Lizzie Flower was a wall-flower. That is to say, she had early in life rid herself of the admiration of the many, by refusing to supply an unlimited amount of small talk. In feature she was as plain as George Eliot. A boy is plastic, and even a modest wall-flower can woo him; but a man, for her, inspires awe—with him she takes no liberties. And the wall-flower woos the youth unwittingly, thinking the while she is only using her influence the better to instruct him.

✿ It is fortunate for a boy escaping adolescence to be educated and loved (the words are synonymous) by a good woman. Indeed the youngster who has not violently loved a woman old enough to be his mother, has dropped something out of his life that he will have to go back and pick up in another incarnation.

I said Robert liked Lizzie Flower first-rate; and she declared that he was the brightest and most receptive pupil she had ever had.

He was seventeen—she was twenty-six. They read Shelley, Keats and Byron aloud, and together passed through the "Byronic Period." They became violently atheistic, and at the same time decidedly religious: things that seem paradoxical, but are not. They adopted a vegetable diet and for two years they eschewed meat. They worshipped in the woods, feeling that the

ROBERT groves were God's first temples; and sitting at the
BROWNING gnarled roots of some great oak, they would read aloud,
by turn, from "Queen Mab."

On one such excursion out across Hampstead Heath they lost their copy of "Shelley" in the leaves, and a wit has told us that it sprouted, and as a result—the flower and fruit—we have Browning's poem of "Pauline." And this must be so, for Robert & Miss Flower (he always called her "Miss Flower," but she called him "Robert") made many an excursion, in search of the book, yet they never found it.

Robert now being eighteen, a man grown,—not large but very strong and wiry,—his father made arrangements for him to take a minor clerkship in the Bank. But the boy rebelled—he was going to be an artist, or a poet, or something like that.

The father argued that a man could be a poet and still work in a bank—the salary was handy; and there was no money in poetry. In fact, he himself was a poet, as his father had been before him. To be a bank clerk and at the same time a poet—what nobler ambition!

The young man was still stubborn. He was feeling discontented with his environment: he was cramped, cabined, cribbed, confined. He wanted to get out of the world of petty plodding and away from the silly round of conventions, out into the world of art—or else of barbarism—he did n't care which.

The latter way opened first, and a bit of wordy warfare with his father on the subject of idleness sent him

off to a gipsy camp at Epsom Downs. How long he lived with the vagabonds we do not know, but his swarthy skin, and his skill as a boxer and wrestler, recommended him to the ragged gentry & they received him as a brother.

It is probable that a week of pure vagabondia cured him of the idea that civilization is a disease, for he came back home, made a bonfire of his attire, and after a vigorous tubbing, was clothed in his right mind.


Groggy studies in French under a private tutor followed, and then came a term as special student in Greek at London University.

To be nearer the school, he took lodgings in Gower Street; but within a week a slight rough-house incident occurred that crippled most of the furniture in his room and deprived the stair-rail of its spindles. R. Browning, 2nd, bank clerk, paid the damages, and R. Browning, 3rd, aged twenty, came back home, formally notifying all parties concerned that he had chosen a career—it was Poetry. He would woo the divine Goddess, no matter who opposed. There now! His mother was delighted; his father gave reluctant consent, declaring that any course in life was better than vacillation; and Miss Flower, who probably had

sown the dragon's teeth, assumed a look
of surprise, but gave it as her opinion
that Robert Browning would
yet be Poet-Laureate
of England.



ROBERT BROWNING awoke one morning with a start—it was the morning of his thirtieth birthday. One's thirtieth birthday and one's seventieth are days that press their message home with iron hand. With his seventieth milestone past, a man feels that his work is done, and dim voices call to him from across the Unseen. His work is done, and so illy, compared with what he had wished & expected! But the impressions made upon his heart by the day are no deeper than those his thirtieth birthday inspires. At thirty, youth, with all it palliates and excuses, is gone forever. The time for mere fooling is past; the young avoid you, or else look up to you as a Nestor and tempt you to grow reminiscent. You are a man & must give an account of yourself.

Out of the stillness came a Voice to Robert Browning saying, "What has thou done with the talent I gave thee?" 

What had he done? It seemed to him at the moment as if he had done nothing. He arose and looked into the mirror. A few gray hairs were mixed in his beard; there were crow's feet on his forehead; and the first joyous flush of youth had gone from his face forever. He was a bachelor, inwardly at war with his environment, but making a bold front with his tuppence worth of philosophy to conceal the unrest within.

A bachelor of thirty, strong in limb, clear in brain and yet a dependent! No one but himself to support and could n't even do that! Gadzooks! Fie upon all poetry and a plague upon this dumb, dense, shopkeeping, beer-drinking nation upon which the sun never sets!



ROBERT
BROWNING

✻ The father of Robert Browning had done everything a father could. He had supplied board and books, and given his son an allowance of a pound a week for ten years. He had sent him on a journey to Italy, and published several volumes of the young man's verse at his own expense. And these books were piled high in the garret, save a few that had been bought by charitable friends or given away.

✻ Robert Browning was not discouraged—oh no, not that! only the world seemed to stretch out in a dull, monotonous gray, where once it was green, the color of hope, and all decked with flowers.


The little literary world of London knew Browning and respected him. He was earnest and sincere and his personality carried weight. His face was not handsome, but his manner was one of poise and purpose; and to come within his aura and look into his calm eyes was to respect the man and make obeisance to the intellect that you felt lay behind.

A few editors had gone out of their way to "discover" him to the world, but their lavish reviews fell flat. Buyers would not buy—no one seemed to want the wares of Robert Browning. He was hard to read, difficult, obscure—or else there was n't anything in it all:

ROBERT BROWNING they did n't know which  Fox, editor of the "Repository," had met Browning at the Flowers' and liked him. He tried to make his verse go, but could n't. Yet he did what he could & insisted that Browning should go with him to the "Sunday evenings" at Barry Cornwall's. There Browning met Leigh Hunt, Monckton Milnes and Dickens 

Then there were dinner parties at Sergeant Talfourd's, where he got acquainted with Wordsworth, Walter Savage Landor and Macready.

Macready impressed him greatly and he impressed Macready. He gave the actor a copy of "Paracelsus," (one of the pile in the garret) and Macready suggested he write a play. "Strafford" was the result, and we know it was stillborn, and caused a very frosty feeling to exist for many a year between the author and actor. When a play fails the author blames the actor and the actor damns the author. These men were human.

 Of course Browning's kinsmen all considered him a failure, and when the father paid over the weekly allowance he often rubbed it in a bit. Lizzie Flower had modified her prophecy as to the Laureateship, but was still loyal. They had tiffed occasionally, & broken off the friendship, and once I believe returned letters. To marry was out of the question—he could n't support himself—& besides that they were old, demnition old; he was past thirty and she was forty—Gramercy! They tiffed.

Then they made up.

In the meantime Browning had formed a friendship, very firm and frank, but strictly Platonic, of course, for Fanny Haworth. Miss Haworth had seen more of the world than Miss Flower—she was an artist, a writer and moved in the best society. Browning and Miss Haworth wrote letters to each other for a while most every day, and he called on her every Wednesday and Saturday evening.

Miss Haworth bought and gave away many copies of "Pauline," "Sordello" and "Paracelsus"; and informed her friends that "Pippa Passes" and "Two in a Gondola" were great quality.

About this time we find Edward Moxon, the publisher (who married the adopted daughter of Charles and Mary Lamb) saying to Browning: "Your verse is all right, Browning, but a book of it is too much: people are appalled; they cannot digest it. And when it goes into a magazine it is lost in the mass. Now just let me get out your work in little monthly installments, in booklet form, and I think it will go."

✿ Browning jumped at the idea.

The booklets were gotten out in paper covers and offered at a moderate price.

They sold, and sold well. The literary elite bought them by the dozen to give away.

People began to talk about Browning—he was getting a foothold. His royalties now amounted to as much as the weekly allowance from his father, and Pater was talking of cutting off the stipend entirely. Finances

ROBERT being easy, Browning thought it a good time to take
BROWNING another look at Italy. Some of the best things
he had written had been inspired by Venice and Asolo—he would go again.
And so he engaged passage on
a sailing ship for Naples.





HORTLY after Browning's return ROBERT to London in 1844, he dined at Ser- BROWNING geant Talfourd's. After the dinner

a well dressed and sprightly old gentleman introduced himself and begged that Browning would inscribe a copy of "Bells & Pomegranates," that he had gotten specially bound. There is an an-

cient myth about writers being harassed by autograph fiends and all that, but the simple fact is, nothing so warms the cockles of an author's heart as to be asked for his autograph. Of course Browning graciously complied with the gentleman's request, and in order that he might insert the owner's name in the inscription, asked:

"What name, please?"

And the answer was, "John Kenyon."

Then Mr. Browning and Mr. Kenyon had a nice little visit, talking about books and art. And Mr. Kenyon told Mr. Browning that Miss Elizabeth Barrett, the poetess, was a cousin of his—he was a bit boastful of the fact.

And Mr. Browning nodded and said he had often heard of her, and admired her work.

Then Mr. Kenyon suggested that Mr. Browning write and tell her so—"You see she has just gotten out a new book, and we are all a little nervous about how it is going to take. Miss Barrett lives in a darkened

ROBERT room, you know—sees no one—and a letter from a
BROWNING man like you would encourage her greatly.”

Mr. Kenyon wrote the address of Miss Barrett on a card and pushed it across the table.

Mr. Browning took the card, put it in his pocketbook and promised to write Miss Barrett, as Mr. Kenyon requested.

And he did.

Miss Barrett replied.

Mr. Browning answered, and soon several letters a week were going in each direction.

Not quite so many missives were being received by Fanny Haworth, and as for Lizzie Flower, I fear she was quite forgotten. She fell into a decline, drooped and died in a year.

Mr. Browning asked for permission to call on Miss Barrett *ff*

Miss Barrett explained that her father would not allow it, neither would the doctor or nurse, & added, “There is nothing to see in me. I am a weed fit for the ground and darkness.”

But this repulse only made Mr. Browning want to see her the more. He appealed to Mr. Kenyon, who was the only person allowed to call, besides Miss Mitford—Mr. Kenyon was her cousin.

Mr. Kenyon arranged it—he was an expert at arranging anything of a delicate nature. He timed the hour when Mr. Barrett was down town, and the nurse and doctor safely out of the way, and they called on the invalid

prisoner in the darkened room. They did not stay long, but when they went away Robert Browning trod on air. The beautiful girl-like face, in its frame of dark curls lying back among the pillows, haunted him like a shadow. He was thirty-three, she was thirty-five. She looked like a child, but the mind—the subtle, appreciative, receptive mind! The mind that caught every allusion, that knew his thought before he voiced it, that found nothing obscure in his work and that put a high and holy construction on his every sentence—it was divine! divinity incarnated in a woman.

Robert Browning tramped the streets forgetful of meat, drink or rest.

He would give this woman freedom. He would devote himself to restoring her to the air and sunshine. What nobler ambition! He was an idler, he had never done anything for anybody. He was only a killer of time, a vagrant, but now was his opportunity—he would do for this beautiful soul what no one else on earth could do. She was slipping away as it was—the world would soon lose her. Was there none to save?

Here was the finest intellect ever given to a woman—so sure, so vital, so tender and yet so strong!

He would love her back to life and light!

And so Robert Browning told her all this shortly after, but before he told, she had divined his thought. For solitude and loneliness and heart hunger had given her the power of an astral being; she was in communication with all the finer forces that pervade our ether.

ROBERT BROWNING He would love her back to life and light—he told her so. She grew better.

And soon we find her getting up & throwing wide the shutters. It was no longer the darkened room, for the sunlight came dancing through the apartment, driving out all the dark shadows that lurked therein.

The doctor was indignant ; the nurse resigned.

Of course, Mr. Barrett was not taken into confidence and no one asked his consent. Why should they?—he was the man who could never understand.

So one fine day when the coast was clear, the couple went over to St. Mary-le-Bone Church & were married. The bride went home alone—could walk all right now—and it was a week before her husband saw her, because he would not be a hypocrite and go ring the door bell and ask if Miss Barrett was home ; and of course if he had asked for Mrs. Robert Browning, no one would have known whom he wanted to see.

But at the end of a week, the bride stole down the stairs, while the family was at dinner, leading her dog Flush by a string, & all the time, with throbbing heart, she prayed the dog not to bark. I have oft wondered in the stilly night season what the effect on English Letters would have been, had the dog really barked ! But the dog did not bark ; & Elizabeth met her lover-husband there on the corner where the mail box is. No one missed the runaway until the next day, & then the bride and groom were safely in France, writing letters back from Dieppe, asking forgiveness and craving blessings.



HE is the Genius and I am the ROBERT
Clever Person," Browning used BROWNING

to say. And this I believe will be
the world's final judgment *✿ ✿*
Browning knew the world in its
every phase—good and bad, high
and low, society and commerce,
the shop and gypsy camp. He ab-
sorbed things, assimilated them,

compared and wrote it out.

Elizabeth Barrett had never traveled, her opportuni-
ties for meeting people had been few, her experiences
limited, and yet she evolved truth: she secreted beau-
ty from within.

For two years after their elopement they did not write
—how could they? goodness me! They were on their
wedding tour. They lived in Florence and Rome and
in various mountain villages in Italy.

Health came back, and joy and peace and perfect love
were theirs. But it was joy bought with a price—Eliz-
abeth Barrett Browning had forfeited the love of her
father. Her letters written him came back unopened,
books inscribed to him were returned—he declared
she was dead.

Her brothers, too, discarded her, and when her two
sisters wrote, they did so by stealth, and their letters,
meant to be kind, were steel for her heart. Then her
father was rich; and she had always known every
comfort that money could buy. Now, she had taken up

ROBERT BROWNING with a poor poet and every penny had to be counted —absolute economy was demanded. And Robert Browning, with a certain sense of guilt upon him, for depriving her of all the creature comforts she had known, sought by tenderness and love to make her forget the insults her father heaped upon her.

As for Browning, the bank clerk, he was vexed that his son should show so little caution as to load himself up with an invalid wife, and he cut off the allowance, declaring that if a man was old enough to marry, he was also old enough to care for himself. He did, however, make his son several "loans;" and finally came to "bless the day that his son had sense enough to marry the best and most talented woman on earth."

Browning's poems were selling slowly, & Mrs. Browning's books brought her a little royalty, thanks to the loyal management of John Kenyon, and so absolute want & biting poverty did not overtake the runaways. After the birth of her son in 1849, Mrs. Browning's health seemed to have fully returned. She used to ride horseback up and down the mountain passes, & wrote home to Miss Mitford that love had turned the dial backward and the joyousness of girlhood had come again to her.

When John Kenyon died and left them ten thousand pounds, all their own, it placed them forever beyond the apprehension of want, and also enabled them to do for others; for they pensioned old Walter Savage Landor, & established him in comfortable quarters around

the corner from Casa Guidi ♣ I intimated a moment ago that their honeymoon continued for two years. This was a mistake, for it continued for just fifteen years, when the beautiful girl-like form, with her head of flowing curls upon her husband's shoulder, ceased to breathe. Painlessly and without apprehension or premonition, the spirit had taken its flight.

ROBERT
BROWNING

That letter of Miss Blagdon's, written some weeks after, telling of how the stricken man paced the echoing hallways at night crying, "I want her! I want her!" touches us like a great, strange sorrow that once pierced our hearts.

But Robert Browning's nature was too strong to be subdued by grief. He remembered that others, too, had buried their dead, and that sorrow had been man's portion since the world began. He would live for his boy—for Her child.

But Florence was no longer his Florence, & he made haste to settle up his affairs and go back to England. He never returned to Florence, and never saw the beautiful monument, designed by his lifelong friend, Frederick Leighton.

When you visit the little English Cemetery at Florence, the slim little girl that comes down the path, swinging the big bunch of keys, opens the high iron gate and leads you, without word or question, straight to the grave of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Browning was forty-nine when Mrs. Browning died. And by the time he had reached his fiftieth meridian,

ROBERT BROWNING England, hearkening to America's suggestion, was awakening to the fact that he was one of the world's great poets.

Honors came slowly, but surely—Oxford with a degree; St. Andrew's with a Lord-Rectorship; publishers with advance payments. And when Smith and Elder paid one hundred pounds for the poem of "Herve Riel," it seemed that at last Browning's worth was being recognized. Not, of course, that money is the infallible test, but even poetry has its Rialto, where the extent of appreciation is shown by prices current.

Browning's best work was done after his wife's death; and in that love he ever lived and breathed. In his seventy-fifth year, it filled his days and dreams as though it were a thing of yesterday, singing in his heart a perpetual eucharist.

"The Ring & the Book" must be regarded as Browning's crowning work. Off-hand critics have disposed of it, but the great minds go back to it again and again. In the character of Pompilia the author sought to pay tribute to the woman whose memory was ever in his mind; yet he was too sensitive and shrinking to fully picture her. He sought to mask his inspiration; but tender, loving recollections of "Ba" are interlaced & interwoven through it all. When Robert Browning died in 1889, the world of literature & art uncovered in token of honor to one who had lived long and well and had done a deathless work. And the doors of storied Westminster opened wide to receive his dust.

SO HERE ENDETH THE LITTLE JOURNEY TO THE
HOME OF ROBERT BROWNING, AS WRITTEN BY EL-
BERT HUBBARD, THE TITLE PAGE, INITIALS & ORNA-
MENTS BEING DESIGNED BY SAMUEL WARNER, AND
THE WHOLE DONE INTO A BOOKLET BY THE ROY-
CROFTERS AT THEIR SHOP, WHICH IS IN EAST AURO-
RA, IN THE MONTH OF OCTOBER, IN THE YEAR MCMI.



2605

LITTLE
JOURNEYS



By
ELBERT
HUBBARD